



United States Senate Budget Committee

JEFF SESSIONS | Ranking Member

Stop The Senate From Breaking The Budget Limit

The Senate Majority wants to unilaterally increase the budget limit for fiscal year 2013 that we agreed to in the Budget Control Act as a condition for raising the debt ceiling.

If allowed, the increase will raise our debt in 2013 by an additional \$14 billion.

Ranking Member Sessions has indicated that the best route to correct the inflated budget limits would be to raise a point of order at the appropriate time.

The Presiding Officer would then likely defer to the Chairman of the Budget Committee to decide whether his own numbers comply with the Budget Control Act—in other words, **the fox would be guarding the henhouse.**

If the Chairman of the Committee finds his own numbers comply with the Budget Control Act, the point of order would not be well taken.

Ranking Member Sessions would then appeal the ruling of the Chair and request a vote on the appeal.

Thus, in this scenario, a vote in the affirmative to overrule the Chair would be a vote to stop the Senate from breaking the budget limit.

How We Go Broke: The Senate Majority Leadership's \$14 Billion Gimmick

As a condition of raising the debt limit, the Budget Control Act of 2011 established fiscal year 2013 spending limits for the Senate. The Act said the total (aggregate) spending limit, as well as the individual limits for authorizing Committees, should be set at CBO's March 2012 Baseline (see legislative text on the next page). The Act required the Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget to put these numbers on paper and have them printed in the *Congressional Record* by April 15, 2012. The Chairman, in coordination with Senate Majority Leadership, submitted figures in late March.¹

However, the aggregate spending limit Chairman Conrad filed is \$14 billion higher than CBO's baseline. This is because he added nearly \$14 billion in new outlays for the Appropriations Committee and \$79 million for the Finance Committee.² The higher spending reflects discretionary spending policies proposed in President Obama's 2013 budget, which boosts outlays. The higher limit **increases the federal debt in 2013 by \$14 billion** compared to that assumed in the CBO baseline.

To demonstrate the significance of this budget violation, if federal government spending includes this additional \$14 billion this year and is built into the baseline, then is repeated by spending another extra \$14 billion the following year, that's already an additional \$42 billion in spending and debt—in just two years. This does not even include the additional interest on the debt. If this practice continued for ten years it would total about \$900 billion in additional spending.

Senator Conrad does not dispute that his figures increase the 2013 outlay limit by \$14 billion compared to the CBO baseline. Nor does he dispute that his revision was derived from President Obama's budget. Senator Conrad claims the language in the Act regarding the Appropriations Committee allows him to change the outlay limit for that Committee as he sees fit (and, correspondingly, change the aggregate spending limit). As for the limit for the Finance Committee, which the Act unambiguously sets at the CBO baseline (see next page), the Chairman asserts the increase for the Finance Committee is compelled by the additional debt the higher spending causes and “simply recognizes the effects on interest costs from the spending levels provided.”³

The plain meaning of the words in the statute shows that Congress intended to set the overall spending limit, and the limit for the Finance Committee, at the CBO baseline. The Act does not allow the Senate Majority Leadership to increase the overall spending limit or the Finance Committee limit just because they want to spend more—and therefore issue more debt—in 2013. The White House and senior Democrats have attacked the House of Representatives for “breaking the deal” by spending less than the budget limits. Yet the Senate Majority is now trying to unilaterally spend more than those limits.

¹ *Congressional Record* 158:46 (March 20, 2012) pp. S1882-S1833.

² The Finance Committee increase is for both budget authority and outlays.

³ Letter from Senator Kent Conrad to Senator Jeff Sessions May 25, 2012.

Budget Control Act Section 106(b) . . .

(2) Not later than April 15, 2012, the Chairman of the Committee on the Budget shall file--

(A) for the Committee on Appropriations, committee allocations for fiscal years 2012 and 2013 consistent with the discretionary spending limits set forth in this Act for the purpose of enforcing section 302 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974;

(B) for all committees other than the Committee on Appropriations, committee allocations for fiscal years 2012, 2013, 2013 through 2017, and 2013 through 2022 consistent with the Congressional Budget Office's March 2012 baseline for the purpose of enforcing section 302 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974;

(C) aggregate spending levels for fiscal years 2012 and 2013 and aggregate revenue levels for fiscal years 2012, 2013, 2013-2017, and 2013-2022 consistent with the Congressional Budget Office's March 2012 baseline and the discretionary spending limits set forth in this Act for the purpose of enforcing section 311 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974; . . .

(emphasis added)

THE MATH	
U.S. Senate Aggregate 2013 Spending Limit	
(outlays in \$ millions)	
CBO March 2012 Baseline	\$2,931,228
Filed aggregate spending limit	\$2,944,872
<i>Resulting additional spending</i>	<i>\$13,644</i>
 Committee on Finance 2013 Spending Limit	
(outlays in \$ millions)	
CBO March 2012 Baseline	\$1,328,395
Filed aggregate spending limit	\$1,328,474
<i>Resulting additional spending</i>	<i>\$79</i>
 <i>TOTAL ADDITIONAL DEBT APPROXIMATELY \$14 BILLION</i>	